

THE MIDDLE TEMPLE MURDER

A Detective Story by J. S. Fletcher

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dress was then 8 Gloucester Square, Baywater, W."

Spargo rapidly wrote this address down, thanked the photographer for his courtesy, and went out with Mr. Quarterpage. In the street he turned to the old gentleman with a smile.

"Well, I don't think there's much doubt about that!" he exclaimed. "Maitland and Marbury are the same man, Mr. Quarterpage. I'm as certain of that as I see your Town Hall there."

"And what will you do next, sir?" inquired Mr. Quarterpage.

"Thank you—as I do—for all your kindness and assistance, and get off to town by this 1:20," replied Spargo. "And I shall fail to let you know how things go on."

"One moment," said the old gentleman, as Spargo was hurrying away. "do you think this Mr. Aylmore really murdered Maitland?"

"No!" answered Spargo with emphasis. "I don't. And I think we've got a good deal to do before we find out who did."

Spargo purposely let the Marbury case drop out of his mind during his journey to town. He ate a hearty lunch in the train and talked with his neighbors; it was a relief to let his mind and attention turn to something else than the theme which had occupied it unconsciously for so many days. But at Reading the newspaper boys were shouting the news of the arrest of a member of Parliament, and Spargo, glancing out of the window, caught sight of a newspaper placard:

The Marbury Murder Case
Arrest of Mr. Aylmore

He snatched a paper from a boy as the train moved out, and, unfolding it, found a mere announcement in the space reserved for stop-press news:

"Mr. Stephen Aylmore, M. P., was arrested at two o'clock this afternoon on his way to the House of Commons, on a charge of being concerned in the murder of John Marbury in Middle Temple Lane on the night of June 21st last. It is understood he will be brought up at Bow street at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning."

Spargo hurried to New Scotland Yard as soon as he reached Paddington. He met Rathbury coming away from his room. At sight of him, the detective turned back.

"Well, so there you are!" he said. "I suppose you've heard the news?"

Spargo nodded as he dropped into a chair.

"What led to it?" he asked abruptly. "There must have been something."

"There was something," he replied. "The thing—stick, bludgeon, whatever you like to call it, some foreign article with which Marbury was struck down was found last night."

"Well?" asked Spargo.

"It was proved to be Aylmore's property," answered Rathbury. "It was a South American curio that he had in his rooms in Fountain Court."

"Where was it found?" asked Spargo.

Rathbury laughed.

"He was a clumsy fellow who did it whether he was Aylmore or whoever he was!" he replied. "Do you know, it had been dropped into a sewer-trap in Middle Temple Lane—actually! Perhaps the murderer thought it would be washed out into the Thames and float away. But, of course, it was bound to come to light. A sewer man found it yesterday evening, and it was quickly recognized by the woman who cleans up for Aylmore as having been in his rooms ever since she knew them."

"What does Aylmore say about it?" asked Spargo.

"I suppose he's about it," said Rathbury.

"Says that the bludgeon is certainly his, and that he brought it from South America with him," announced Rathbury. "but that he doesn't remember seeing it in his rooms for some time, and thinks that it was stolen from them."

"Um!" said Spargo, musingly. "But—how do you know that was the thing that Marbury was struck down with?"

Rathbury smiled grimly.

"There's some of his hair on it—mixed with blood," he answered. "No doubt about that. Well—anything come of your jaunt westward?"

"Yes," replied Spargo. "Lots!"

"Good!" asked Rathbury.

"Extra good. I've found out who Marbury really was."

"No! Really?"

"No doubt, to my mind, I'm certain of it."

Rathbury sat down at his desk, watching Spargo with rapid attention.

"And who was he?" he asked.

"John Maitland, once of Market Milchester," replied Spargo. "Ex-bank manager. Also ex-convict."

"Ex-convict?"

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THE GUMPS—Now, See What You Did

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